

# Engineer Operations in Turkey Support Operation Iraqi Freedom

By Lieutenant Colonel Roxanne Nosal, Lieutenant Colonel Randal Fofi,  
Lieutenant Colonel John McClellan, and Major Shawn McGinley

**I**n the fall of 2002, U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) was directed to open a northern front into Iraq in support of potential actions against the Hussein regime. The area of operations would include an 800-kilometer line of communications in Turkey with up to 18 different nodes—all requiring acquisition of property, careful environmental consideration, and construction or modification to ready them for up to 60,000 soldiers. A hodge-podge of roughly 3,300 Army and Navy engineers had been identified to perform the

mission; however, no headquarters structure was available to oversee the planning or execution. As a result, the reactivation of the 18th Engineer Brigade (theater Army), which was scheduled for June 2003, was moved to 21 January 2003. (See article in *Engineer*, April-June 2003, page 37.)

The reactivation of the 18th Engineer Brigade served two major purposes: First, the core of the brigade headquarters serving as theater engineer planners is fully engaged in the development of operations plans and therefore has the



A Seabee from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4 surveys for the logistics support area near Nusaybin, Turkey.

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**Logistic support areas were constructed primarily through the LOGCAP contract. Shown are bunk beds at Oguzeli.**

advantage of anticipating and planning for engineer requirements in a contingency. Secondly, although the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has enormous capabilities that can be brought to bear as required during contingencies, these assets do not typically come with an overarching headquarters capable of integrating small, specialized units (both Active and Reserve Component) where they can best influence the operation. The 18th Engineer Brigade is fully capable and designed to perform this mission. This became evident in Turkey in February 2003.

### **Operational Concept**

**T**he USAREUR mission in Turkey was to establish and operate the infrastructure required to pass combat forces centered around the 4th Infantry Division through southeastern Turkey into Iraq. This mission was considered vital to achieve the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) commander's intent of opening a credible northern front against Iraqi forces and fixing up to 13 Iraqi divisions in northern Iraq so they could not shift south to engage coalition forces attacking out of Kuwait.

Army Forces–Turkey (ARFOR–T) was organized around four major units:

- 1st Infantry Division provided overall command and control and force protection for all U.S. ground forces in Turkey.
- 21st Theater Support Command operated the logistics infrastructure and sustained all U.S. forces in Turkey and northern Iraq.
- 7th Signal Brigade established and maintained the communications architecture for ARFOR–T.
- 18th Engineer Brigade acquired the property and built or improved the facilities to support the forces.

The original plan allowed up to 60 days for preparatory work before the arrival of combat forces. This included establishing command and control and force protection, acquiring property, opening three seaports and two airports, and establishing operational nodes along 800 kilometers of highway and into Iraq in the east. Node sizes and complexities varied from basic truck stops for driver breaks along the highway to tactical assembly areas up to 50 square kilometers in size. It was envisioned that, once established, the 4th Infantry Division would flow in over a 28-day period and prepare to attack into Iraq.

With the approach of combat operations and no decision by the Turkish government to allow combat forces to pass through the country, the USAREUR commander decided to accelerate the preparation schedule and to focus efforts on those tasks required to support the combat forces initially. Instead of a 60-day preparatory phase, the USAREUR staff developed an abbreviated plan to rapidly acquire and prepare ports and staging areas for use by the 4th Infantry Division. This plan would take about nine days but would allow the rapid introduction of forces into the CENTCOM operation.

### **Scheme of Maneuver and Task Organization**

**T**o support the general operational concept, the USAREUR staff identified the preparatory tasks that had to be completed to receive and pass the 4th Infantry Division. The 18th Engineer Brigade, serving as the USAREUR engineer prior to deploying to Turkey, determined that the essential tasks included acquisition of properties for ports, airfields, headquarters, and staging areas and the establishment of minimum living and sanitation facilities to support the reception and rapid onward movement of combat forces.

The engineer scheme of maneuver was built around these essential preparatory tasks to meet the CENTCOM timeline and assure the success of the overall operation. The compressed timelines drove engineer planners to adopt a course of action that would initiate all essential tasks simultaneously through contract construction—a combination of Kellogg, Brown & Root Services; the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) contractor; and USACE contractors. Military construction units would be focused at the area of greatest need upon their arrival. As essential tasks were completed, engineer effort would be shifted to secondary tasks—mainly those tasks required to sustain ARFOR–T units. If there were sufficient engineer resources in theater, then all tasks would be initiated simultaneously as long as the execution of a secondary task did not interfere with essential tasks. The concept also called for the 18th Engineer Brigade to be prepared to follow and support into northern Iraq as the theater matured and the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) force passed through. Likely missions in northern Iraq would be maintaining supply routes, constructing and repairing bridges, and constructing camps for displaced persons and enemy prisoners of war.

The task organization was built around this concept. The brigade headquarters would be augmented with members of the divisional engineer brigade of the 1st Infantry Division, Forward Engineer Support Teams (FESTs) from USACE, and real estate specialists from the Europe-based Installation Management Agency. The brigade integrated itself into the ARFOR-T with the commander wearing two hats—18th Engineer Brigade commander and ARFOR engineer. The FESTs provided subject matter experts in various fields of engineering as well as contracting officer representatives to help manage contract construction. In addition to construction capability, the brigade's task organization also included base camp maintenance and management capability in the form of facilities engineer teams and prime-power, fire-fighting, and utilities detachments.

### Priorities and Execution

**H**aving identified the essential tasks, the brigade planners prioritized them in coordination with 1st Infantry Division, 21st Theater Support Command, and USAREUR planners. The basic rule of thumb was that priority tasks were those tasks absolutely necessary to receive the 4th Infantry Division at the port, lodge them in austere conditions in a tactical assembly area in the east, and allow them to attack with appropriate stocks of fuel and ammunition.

Once in country, the brigade planners devised a master plan for each node. This process called in site survey chiefs, site officers in charge, force protection specialists, the LOGCAP contractor, and members of the security force to define in detail where everything would go and in what sequence. The tasks to be accomplished at each node were further prioritized so there would be no confusion by the contractor. These prioritized



A 6,700-foot heavy equipment transport bypass for Seyhvelet Bridge

statements of work were provided to the contractor through the contracting officer. The 18th Engineer Brigade served a vital role in the development and approval of all statements of work to ensure that the contractor was focused on only essential tasks. New requirements were submitted to a construction review board to review their validity and to a joint acquisition review board for final approval. At this time, projects identified as having a highly technical and discrete nature were passed to the local USACE office at Incirlik Air Base for action. These projects—the Seyhvelet Bridge bypass and the lightning protection system and Agalar Pier—were issued as individual contracts to specialized Turkish contractors.

### Change of Mission: Increase Support to ARFOR-T

**I**n March, it became obvious that the Turkish government would not make a decision quickly to allow forces into the country. At that time, the ARFOR-T preparatory forces the government of Turkey had allowed in (about 1,800 soldiers) were dispersed throughout Turkey, living under fairly austere conditions and waiting for the go-ahead to continue the mission. With these new circumstances, the ARFOR-T commander shifted the priorities to ensuring an adequate quality of life and providing protection for ARFOR-T soldiers.

In general, this meant shower and sink units and tents/sleeping areas with heat and lights and whatever force protection infrastructure improvements that were deemed necessary. This was a distinct change from the austere approach that had been planned. However, the 18th Engineer Brigade planners were able to quickly modify contract statements of work, and the LOGCAP contractor, with sufficient personnel and materials on the ground, was able to rapidly modify its priorities. The advantage of using the LOGCAP contractor was that it is able to react to changes across a broad front versus having to have individual contracts modified.

### Change of Mission: Closure

**A**s the end of March approached and the government of Turkey had not called for a revote on the introduction of combat forces through Turkey, CENTCOM directed the 4th Infantry Division to proceed to port in Kuwait. No replacement force for the 4th Infantry Division was identified. Since the government of Turkey was also requesting the departure of Operation Northern Watch units, it appeared unlikely that any other support to Operation Iraqi Freedom would be approved. As a result, USAREUR directed ARFOR-T to develop a detailed plan and be prepared to downsize the current ARFOR-T capability and place those facilities into a “warm” status required to either pass a small ground force through Turkey (should

it be approved) or to maintain a ground line of communication through Turkey to sustain forces in northern Iraq. On 2 April 2003, ARFOR-T directed the reshaping of forces in Turkey and began closure operations.

The key closure tasks focused on an orderly and deliberate reduction in forces and equipment while simultaneously returning properties to the appropriate Turkish owners and harvesting as much U.S. material as practical, while ensuring the protection and safety of all personnel. The 18th Engineer Brigade was charged with forming east and west closure teams to return leased lands and facilities to the private owners or government entities of origin. Each of the closure teams was tailored to its particular geographic and facilities makeup and contained expertise in operations, construction management, real estate, environmental engineering, logistics, contracting, and legal matters.

Much attention was paid to the question of what materials were to be recovered, disposed of, or offered to local owners or military forces. Broad guidance from the USAREUR commander to "recover all U.S. government property and return it to the military system" was translated into specific harvesting guidance addressing various commodities. Customs restrictions were researched to ensure that the unit and node commanders were aware of what materials could and should be loaded into unit containers for return to Europe.

Closures in the east were completed by 16 April and in the west by 26 April, culminating with the return of the port of Iskenderun, the last facility required to redeploy the force. In almost every case, the closure teams completed their missions ahead of original projections for the site. The closure checklists, savvy real estate officers, and some smart decisions by the closure teams streamlined the process and ensured that no additional U.S. funds were spent on property rentals beyond already existing commitments.

## Conclusion

The 18th Engineer Brigade was the single agency at the theater level with coordinating responsibilities for all military and civilian engineer capabilities and host nation engineer support, as well as joint and multinational engineer efforts engaged in combat support of a theater of operation. This included the command direction of topographic operations, construction, real property maintenance activities, lines-of-communication sustainment, engineer logistics management, petroleum storage and distribution, and base development. During the deployment to Turkey, the 18th Engineer Brigade managed \$13.8 million of real estate acquisitions and utilities, \$28.1 million of LOGCAP construction, \$992,000 of USACE contract construction, and \$108,000 of materials for military construction. No single construction delivery method could have met the timeline originally proposed. Only a combination of military engineers, LOGCAP construction, and USACE contractors could have completed the mission on the originally proposed timeline. Having a theater Army engineer brigade managing all of the

engineer effort for the Army in the theater allowed the most efficient and cost effective construction delivery method for each situation and made it possible to modify the plan as external forces caused the situation to change.

The theater Army engineer brigade is a unique organization, capable of providing engineer support across the spectrum of military operations depending on which elements are attached to it during the operation. The ability of the organization to be responsive, agile, and versatile is in keeping with the objectives of Army Transformation and will ensure the best possible support to the Future Force.



*Lieutenant Colonel Nosal is the G5/NATO infrastructure officer for the 18th Engineer Brigade and the Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineers, U.S. Army Europe. During the deployment to Turkey, she acted as chief of the administrative/logistics operations center. Recent assignments included Deputy Secretary of the General Staff, V Corps, and executive officer, 130th Engineer Brigade.*

*Lieutenant Colonel Fofi is the deputy brigade commander, 130th Engineer Brigade, V Corps, in Iraq. He was the G3 of the 18th Engineer Brigade for the deployment to Turkey. Previous assignments include commander of the 46th Engineer Battalion (Combat)(Heavy), Fort Polk, Louisiana; liaison officer to the French Engineer School in Angers, France; and brigade S3, 45th Area Support Group, and battalion executive officer of the 84th Engineer Battalion (Combat)(Heavy), both in Hawaii.*

*Lieutenant Colonel McClellan is the G3, 18th Engineer Brigade (Theater Army). During the operation, he served as the brigade's operations officer, working directly out of the ARFOR-T Main in Mardin. Previous assignments include contingency operations officer (SFOR/KFOR) for Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineers, USAREUR; as well as S3, 9th Engineer Battalion, and director of public works in Schweinfurt, Germany.*

*Major McGinley is the chief of operations, Staff Engineer Section, V Corps, in Iraq. He was the chief of plans, G3, 18th Engineer Brigade, for the deployment to Turkey. Other assignments include brigade S3, 1st Infantry Division Engineer Brigade, executive officer of the 9th Engineer Battalion, and assistant division engineer, 1st Infantry Division. He will take command of the 54th Engineer Battalion in summer 2004.*

